

2017 State of the State



Christie's NJ Leads The Fight Against Drug Addiction

"Our state faces a crisis which is more urgent to New Jersey's families than any other issue we could confront. A crisis which is destroying families. One that is ripping the very fabric of our state. The crisis of drug addiction."

-Governor Christie, January 10, 2017

America's addiction crisis impacts family members, friends, neighbors and coworkers across the Garden State. Governor Christie continues to make addiction prevention, treatment and recovery a top priority, as he enacts and expands reforms that are a national model and advocates to end the stigma surrounding this disease.

Opioids kill approximately 90 Americans a day, according to the CDC. New Jersey's drug overdose death rate escalated by nearly 22 percent between 2014 and 2015, with nearly 1,600 lives lost to drugs in 2015. This is not including hundreds of lives saved due to this administration's implementation and expansion of a program allowing first responders to administer the overdose reversal medication Naloxone.

With this deadly disease plaguing more children, men, women and military veterans, Governor Christie today announced further initiatives to bring everyone together to fight addiction, making treatment easier and more accessible for all.

One-Stop Web Portal And Help Line

In his 2017 State of the State Address, Governor Christie is announcing the launch of a one-stop website, www.reachnj.gov, and 24-hour a day, seven-day a week help line, 1-844-REACHNJ, that will remove information barriers and significantly improve access to treatment. By clicking or calling, people will have immediate access to life-saving prevention, treatment, recovery and reentry information.

- **Nobody Is Alone:** These resources will, in part, provide treatment locations, insurance guidance, parental tips and information on support programs for those in recovery. This will enhance public awareness for those who are most in need.
- **Community Updates:** People can get direct access to programs offered by state agencies and contact information for private and nonprofit groups.

This website and help line will guide those affected by the disease of addiction through what can be a daunting bureaucracy, especially for those currently in crisis.

Investing In Expansion Of Treatment Beds For 18 And 19 Year Olds

Currently, regulations do not allow state-licensed treatment facilities to treat 18 or 19 year-olds as children in our treatment system. The Governor is announcing today that he is instructing the Department of Children and Families to expand its residential services for 18 and 19 year-olds who are struggling with substance abuse, young people

who have previously been served in the adult system. This \$12 million investment will open roughly 200 beds to hundreds of young people seeking help. This will ensure that those in recovery are appropriately served in a system with peers. This fall, residential substance use disorder treatment services will be further expanded to include people younger than 20 years.

- Governor Christie's action will allow more young people to receive the highly individualized care they need to recover and reclaim their lives from addiction.

Providing Options For New Jerseyans Seeking Substance Free Housing

To further support New Jersey's college students who have been caught in the addiction epidemic, Governor Christie today announced a \$1 million increase for college housing programs set up for students in recovery. These "recovery dorms" provide a community of support for students in need of counseling and additional supports and can be a useful tool in the life-long battle to maintain sobriety.

The effort to support those who exit treatment and are in recovery cannot stop at college. As such, today, Governor Christie is calling on the legislature to ease overly restrictive statutory, regulatory and code hurdles for residences that provide supportive and substance free housing in our communities. With Senator Vitale, the Governor is advocating for a more flexible environment that encourages Sober Living Homes in New Jersey that provide a safe haven to help those in recovery get back on their feet and return as productive members of society.

Expanding Access To Substance Use Disorder Treatment

People seeking treatment cannot be denied access in their time of need waiting on an insurance carrier's approval. That is why Governor Christie is calling on the legislative leadership to expeditiously introduce and pass legislation in the next 30 days that would:

- Mandate that no insured can be denied coverage for the first six months of drug rehabilitation treatment.

Denying assistance to those suffering from addiction will not get New Jersey out of this public health crisis, but rather would further spread a growing, deadly disease.

Increasing Prevention Efforts

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, four out of five new heroin users started by misusing prescription painkillers. In order to prevent such escalation, Governor Christie is directing the Attorney General's office to use emergency rule-making and other regulatory reform to limit the supply of opioid-based pain medications that physicians, dentists and other licensed health care providers prescribe to patients presenting with acute pain.

Presently in New Jersey, health care providers can write initial prescriptions for opioid painkillers that provide up to a 30-day supply. Since addiction can occur sometimes within days, this additional preventative action must be taken to prevent addiction from the start:

- Limiting supply to five days that can be obtained at the outset of treatment; and
- Requiring prescribers to consult with patients and provide further authorization for additional quantities.
- If necessary, allowing the Attorney General to open investigations into the prescribing practices of our medical community and their interactions with the industry manufacturing these drugs.

A blanket 30-day opiate prescription is excessive considering the effect opiate-based pain medications are having on the current addiction crisis. According to the CDC, in 2012, health care providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for opioid pain medication, enough for every adult in the United States to have a bottle of pills. Opioid prescriptions per capita increased 7.3 percent from 2007 to 2012, with opioid prescribing rates increasing more for family

practice, general practice, and internal medicine compared with other specialties. Limiting the supply of opioid based pain medication is one step that must be taken to prevent addiction before it starts.

Creating Governor's Task Force On Drug Abuse Control

The Governor is also calling on the Attorney General's Office to create a task force on drug abuse control to mount a coordinated attack on drug abuse by working with all areas of state government to fight this complex problem together. The task force will spearhead a multi-pronged, multi-agency attack on the addiction crisis in an effort to deter narcotics trafficking, drug diversion, drug abuse and drug addiction.

Governor Christie is announcing School Development Authority CEO and former Chief Counsel Charles McKenna will serve as Chairman. His time as a former federal prosecutor and Chief Counsel give him the knowledge and experience that will be essential in this fight.

Expanding The Pediatric Behavioral Health Collaborative

The Governor announced today an additional \$5 million for the statewide expansion of this **successful** pilot program providing telehealth hubs with a psychiatrist on call for pediatricians. Participating pediatricians receive training on how to screen children for behavioral health conditions and substance use and provide immediate connection to a specialist and referral source, while the youth and their parents are in the office. In urgent cases, a face-to-face consultation is available within hours on the very same day.

Breaking The Barrier To Employment

New Jersey has already "banned the box," breaking one barrier to employment for those who have recovered from addiction.

To continue facilitating people's return to normalcy, this administration, in partnership with Koch Industries and their General Counsel Mark Holden, will work collaboratively with New Jersey-based companies to depart from many of the long-accepted exclusions from employment of the formerly incarcerated. This March, we will host an Employment Opportunity Summit that will bring together business, legal and human resources executives to ensure that New Jersey is at the forefront of helping people get back to work and become productive citizens and taxpayers.

Efforts like this will help people reclaim their lives and avoid going back to jail.

Partnering With The Federal Government

Governor Christie recognizes that maximizing drug treatment in New Jersey means enlisting the help of the federal government. One of the most important ways the federal government can help is to allow states to treat addiction in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

- Federal Medicaid funds cannot currently be used for people who are receiving inpatient substance abuse treatment in a facility with more than 16 beds, because such facilities are categorized as "Institutions for Mental Diseases."
- Governor Christie is calling on Acting Human Services Commissioner Beth Connelly to work with Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Administrator Seema Verna to lead the fight in removing this antiquated regulation, as doing so would allow New Jersey to double the amount of Medicaid beds that could be used for treatment and lead to recovery.

Ending The Stigma

As part of this campaign, the Governor is calling on all elements of government to identify ways to combat this disease, whether it be prevention, support or treatment:

- **Department of Education:** The Governor is calling on the Commissioner of Education to adopt a model curriculum specific to opioids so that every school has access to comprehensive opioid-inclusive drug education. This robust new curriculum will be tailored to every age group, with a simple and direct message that will start in kindergarten: the medicine in your bathroom cabinets is not safe for kids, just because it was prescribed by a doctor.
- **Department of Corrections:** Governor Christie also will direct Corrections Commissioner Gary Lanigan to expand DOC's Project PRIDE, which brings minimum security inmates to middle and high schools to share how drug abuse led them to addiction and prison.